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RUEHSF/AMEMBASSY SOFIA 0021
RUEHVI/AMEMBASSY VIENNA 0564
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 1211
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 1693
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 0409
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC//DHO-2/REA/NMJIC-J2//
RHMFIS/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL//CCJ2/HSE/CCJ5//
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC//J5/RUE//

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ASHGABAT 001002

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR SCA/CEN (PERRY)

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/24/2016

TAGS: PHUM PGOV PREL TX

SUBJECT: MYRADOVA FAMILY DISPERSES, WILL CONSIDER NEXT STEPS COLLECTIVELY

REF: A. A) ASHGABAT 998

¶B. B) ASHGABAT 987 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: Acting DCM Heather Troutman for reasons 1.4 (B) and (D)

Summary

¶1. (C) Emboffs met with a frightened and cautious Sona Myradova, the younger daughter of recently deceased journalist Ogulsapar Myradova, at the Myradova apartment September 25. Myradova confirmed that Myradova's three children have dispersed, and that they are not in communication via telephone due to safety concerns. She also indicated that she did not want post to have her new cellular telephone number and said that the family would contact the embassy when the children decide how they want to interact with the international community. In a related development, Charge told Foreign Minister Rashit Meredov September 24 that the Myradova autopsy should be released to both the family and the public, and informed him that post has pictures of the body. End Summary.

Condolences Shared with Myradova

¶2. (C) During the second attempt to meet with the Myradova family in four days, emboffs succeeded in meeting the younger daughter, Sona, September 25 at the family apartment. Although hospitable and polite, Myradova was brief in her comments and deferred all questions to her family -- brother, sister and uncle -- for replies. (Note: The uncle resides in Sofia, Bulgaria. End Note.) She confirmed that the family is not living together due to safety concerns, and although they all have limited access to telephones, they are not communicating telephonically. Myradova said they are all very fearful.

¶3. (C) Emboffs gave Myradova English and Russian language texts of a condolence letter signed by the Charge that included RFE/RL Acting President Jeff Trimble's expression of condolences to the family. Emboffs also delivered copies of U.S. Ambassador to the OSCE Julie Finley's September 21

intervention in Vienna and the Helsinki Foundation's press statement regarding Ogulsapar Myradova's death.

Deferred Decisions

¶4. (C) Myradova deferred any decision regarding having contact with European Union representatives to the collective judgment of her family. She added that the family would discuss the possibility of asking the Government of Turkmenistan to share publicly the results of her mother's autopsy and/or choosing to share the family copy of the autopsy with the international community. Myradova added that the family expected the autopsy report by October 1, but also detailed a series of actions the family would need to take to secure a copy of the autopsy report. She said that the family fears the government's response to further contact with the international community in general. Although emboffs detected no overt surveillance of the residence upon arrival, after the 10-15 minute conversation ended, emboffs observed one individual who, unlike other passers-by, took a distinct interest in emboffs' departure from the residence.

Government Informed of Photographs

¶5. (C) During a September 24 meeting with the Charge on another issue, Foreign Minister Rashit Meredov told Charge that the Government of Turkmenistan was legally prohibited from publicly releasing the autopsy results. Charge suggested that the family might grant the Government of Turkmenistan authorities the requisite permission, but Meredov was non-committal. In addition, Charge informed Meredov that the embassy has photographs of Myradova's body,

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implying that the United States could reject obvious untruths.

Comment

¶6. (C) While further contacts with the western diplomatic community do pose a threat, the larger danger may be the family's continued contact with their uncle in Bulgaria. The family's belief that it is staying ahead of the government in finding untapped phone lines seems naive, given the government's control of telecommunications. In seeking advice from family members who do not reside in Turkmenistan, the family may, in fact, be playing into the government's hands. With the reportedly impending release of the autopsy results, the decision is with the family -- and the government -- on next steps, including engagement with the international community. End Comment.

BRUSH